

HADRIAN'S CYCLEWAY



About the Authors

Carl McKeating and Rachel Crolla live on the edge of the Yorkshire Dales. They are outdoor pursuits all-rounders, with specialisms in climbing and mountaineering; Rachel notably became the first woman to reach the highest point of every country in Europe in 2007. The couple had their earliest cycling adventures together as teenagers in 1994. They learnt the hard way by carrying camping gear for nine days on their first extended cycle tour round the north of England in 1996, with the Buttertubs Pass between Wensleydale and Swaledale – famously used on the opening stage of the 2014 Tour de France – proving the toughest challenge (although the following descent with dodgy brakes was also interesting!). Carl attempted to cycle to Egypt during winter the following year – a tour that was cut short at the Somme by his bike's ball-bearings having ground to a paste. In the early 2000s the couple cycled Sustrans' C2C and a six-day version of the Walney to Wear ride that finished on Holy Island. In 2018 Rachel Crolla's guide *Cycling the Way of the Roses* (Cicerone) was published; her work on the book inspired Carl to ride the whole 170-mile tour in a day. The couple have enjoyed fostering a love of cycling in their two children and have included many family cycle routes in their recent book, *Outdoor Adventures with Children: Lake District* (Cicerone, 2019).

Other Cicerone guides by the authors

Cycling the Way of the Roses (by Rachel Crolla)

Europe's High Points

Outdoor Adventures with Children – Lake District

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Walking in the Auvergne

HADRIAN'S CYCLEWAY

COAST-TO-COAST CYCLING
FROM RAVENGLASS TO SOUTH SHIELDS

by Carl McKeating and Rachel Crolla

CICERONE

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Updates to this guide

While every effort is made by our authors to ensure the accuracy of guidebooks as they go to print, changes can occur during the lifetime of an edition. Any updates that we know of for this guide will be on the Cicerone website (www.cicerone.co.uk/1042/updates), so please check before planning your trip. We also advise that you check information about such things as transport, accommodation and shops locally. Even rights of way can be altered over time.

We are always grateful for information about any discrepancies between a guidebook and the facts on the ground, sent by email to updates@cicerone.co.uk or by post to Cicerone, Juniper House, Murley Moss, Oxenholme Road, Kendal, LA9 7RL.

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All of the research, editorial and design work for this guide was completed early in 2020 before the coronavirus lockdown, and the guide was printed during this period. There may be changes to the route as a result, particularly in relation to accommodation and other facilities. Please bear this in mind and let us know of any changes you encounter. Any updates we receive will be reviewed by the authors and shared on the Cicerone website.

Front cover: Passing Hadrian's Wall at Birdoswald (Day 2)

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Sycamore Gap (Day 2A)

Acknowledgements

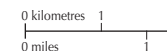
Thanks in particular to Louise Robinson for coming along on our first experience of the ride. Likewise thanks to Chris Truss for an early start in order to cycle Day 1 and having to pose for our photos at Sellafield – which intrigued the police security! Thanks to the energetic three sisters – Esther, Kate and Sarah Robinson – who were using part of Hadrian's Cycleway (HCW) on a tour connecting Snowdon, Scafell Pike and Ben Nevis and who recommend beginning HCW with a hike up Scafell Pike! Thanks also to Matt, Lynne and Phil Robinson for imparting local knowledge of the route and their help with the Emperor Hadrian statue in Brampton.

Thanks are due to our daughters, Heather and Rosa, who have accompanied us on numerous HCW outings – some with later than expected finishes – but who at least had plenty of fun sitting on the car roof cheering on HCW cyclists. Also thanks to Stephanie Crolla, whose caravan proved useful in support of work on days 1 and 2 of this guide.

Symbols used on route maps

	route		caution
	traffic-free section		café
	alternative route		public house
	traffic-free section on alternative route		bike shop
	route direction		refreshments available
	start point		toilets
	finish point		all amenities
	alternative start point		castle
	alternative finish point		battlefield
	steep ascent or descent		church/cathedral
	very steep ascent or descent		monastery/cross
	station/railway line		tourist office
	course of Hadrian's Wall		point of interest
			viewpoint

SCALE: 1:100,000

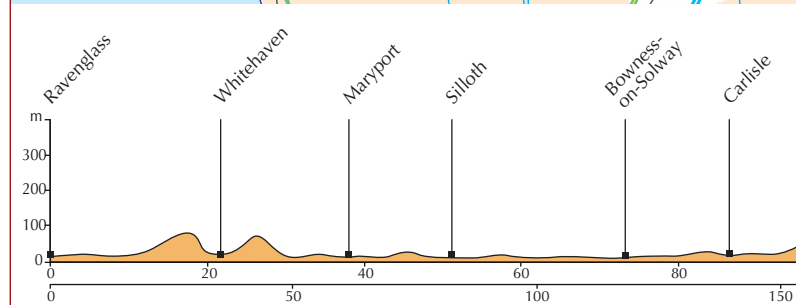


Contour lines are drawn at 50m intervals and labelled at 100m intervals. Route maps are drawn at 1:100,000 (1cm = 1km)

GPX files for all routes can be downloaded free at www.cicerone.co.uk/1042/GPX.

Features on the overview map

	County/Unitary boundary		National Park eg THE LAKE DISTRICT
	National boundary		Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty eg Solway Coast
	Urban area		



ROUTE SUMMARY TABLES

Hadrian's Cycleway: three-day ride

	Start	Finish	Distance	Ascent	Page
Day 1	Ravenglass (SD 089 959)	Silloth (NY 110 537)	53 miles (85km)	633m	38
Day 2	Silloth (NY 110 537)	Haltwhistle (NY 705 640)	64 miles (103km)	782m	59
Day 3	Haltwhistle (NY 705 640)	South Shields (NZ 364 680)	57 miles (89km)	953m	90

Hadrian's Cycleway with More Wall Alternative: three-day ride

	Start	Finish	Distance	Ascent	Page
Day 1	Ravenglass (SD 089 959)	Bowness-on-Solway (NY 223 627)	74 miles (119km)	721m	38
Day 2	Bowness-on-Solway (NY 223 627)	Once Brewed (NY 753 670)	49 miles (79km)	932m	64
Day 3	Once Brewed (NY 753 670)	South Shields (NZ 364 680)	48 miles (77km)	721m	89

Hadrian's Cycleway east to west: three-day ride

	Start	Finish	Distance	Ascent	Page
Day 1	South Shields (NZ 364 680)	Haltwhistle (NY 705 640)	57 miles (89km)	1050m	118
Day 2	Haltwhistle (NY 705 640)	Silloth (NY 110 537)	64 miles (103km)	680m	83
Day 3	Silloth (NY 110 537)	Ravenglass (SD 088 959)	53 miles (85km)	630m	58

Hadrian's Cycleway the Wall Only: two-day ride

	Start	Finish	Distance	Ascent	Page
Day 1	Bowness-on-Solway (NY 223 627)	Haltwhistle (NY 705 640)	43 miles (69km)	710m	64
Day 2	Haltwhistle (NY 705 640)	South Shields (NZ 364 680)	57 miles (92km)	953m	90

Hadrian's Cycleway: suggested four-day itinerary

	Start	Finish	Distance	Page
Day 1	Ravenglass (SD 089 959)	Allonby (NY 081 429)	42 miles (68km)	38
Day 2	Allonby (NY 081 429)	Warwick Bridge (NY 478 570)	53 miles (85km)	56
Day 3	Warwick Bridge (NY 478 570)	Once Brewed (NY 753 670)	30 miles (48km)	74
Day 4	Once Brewed (NY 753 670)	South Shields (NZ 364 680)	48 miles (77km)	89

Hadrian's Cycleway: suggested five-day itinerary

	Start	Finish	Distance	Page
Day 1	Ravenglass (SD 089 959)	Maryport (NY 081 429)	37 miles (60km)	38
Day 2	Maryport (NY 081 429)	Burgh by Sands (NY 320 590)	45 miles (72km)	54
Day 3	Burgh by Sands (NY 320 590)	Gilsland (NY 632 666)	29 miles (47km)	68
Day 4	Gilsland (NY 632 666)	Corbridge (NY 989 645)	32 miles (52km)	80
Day 5	Corbridge (NY 989 645)	South Shields (NZ 364 680)	31 miles (50km)	102

Hadrian's Cycleway: suggested two-day itinerary

	Start	Finish	Distance	Page
Day 1	Ravenglass (SD 089 959)	Brampton (NY 529 611)	103 miles (166km)	38
Day 2	Brampton (NY 529 611)	South Shields (NZ 364 680)	71 miles (114km)	77



INTRODUCTION



Hadrian's Wall from Birdoswald with Walltown Crags in the distance (Day 2)

Hadrian's Cycleway (HCW) is a magnificent 174-mile (277km) coast-to-coast ride that crosses northern England along the most northerly frontier of the Roman Empire. The route takes in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Hadrian's Wall and its fascinating settlements, forts, milecastles, fortlets and turrets. The ride allows cyclists to follow the route of centurions from Glannaventa Fort in Ravenglass to Arbeia Fort in South Shields, connecting many famous vestiges of Roman Britain in between that include Birdoswald, Housesteads, Vindolanda, Chesters and Corbridge Roman Town. Taking time to explore the Wall and its associated forts and

settlements will get the most out of the ride. Yet even without the enticing prospect of the Wall, HCW would be tremendous in its own right. Sustrans has done a good job designing the route predominately on minor roads and cycle paths. While a number of towns and cities are connected on HCW, including Whitehaven, Workington, Carlisle, Haltwhistle, Hexham and the extended Newcastle urban area, these are mostly negotiated by enjoyable, cleverly worked, traffic-free cycle paths along rivers and dismantled railways. HCW takes in parts of two national parks – the Lake District and Northumberland – in addition to exploring the Solway

Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Beginning in Ravenglass, the ride serves up delicate Cumbrian coastal strands overlooked by red sandstone cliffs or skirted by gentle rolling foothills – tamed echoes of the great Lakeland fells. These give way to the wild beauty of the northern Pennines before finally country is exchanged for town and the route snakes along cycle paths beside the River Tyne to the North Sea.

Hadrian's Cycleway, also known as National Route 72, opened in the summer of 2006. It belongs to the Sustrans family of northern coast-to-coast routes that includes the original C2C, the excellent Way of the Roses and the impressive Reivers Route. While there are plentiful Roman points of interest on the official HCW, more could have been made of the

most famous sections of Hadrian's Wall; the descent from Greenwhelt Bank to Haltwhistle and the ensuing valley ride on the official route misses the opportunity to see the Wall in its best locations. We have sought to rectify this and, as well as the official route, we describe the More Wall Alternative (MWA) – a variation that enhances the riding experience on the tour and is strongly recommended.

WHY CHOOSE HADRIAN'S CYCLEWAY?

Hadrian's Cycleway makes a perfect short cycle tour. If trying to decide between HCW and other Sustrans coast-to-coast routes, HCW is more road bike-friendly than either the C2C or the Reivers. It also involves considerably less ascent than either of those



The gradient from the trough of Vindolanda delivers the second toughest climb of the route (Day 3)

two routes and quite a bit less than the Way of the Roses further south. It has fewer sections on or near busy roads than the C2C. It is also easier to truncate the route yet maintain the coast-to-coast element: this book includes a description of a Wall Only two-day ride that skips the Cumbrian coast and concentrates on the line of Hadrian's Wall for those cyclists short on time who are looking for a manageable cycle tour that can fit a two-day weekend (see Other itineraries).

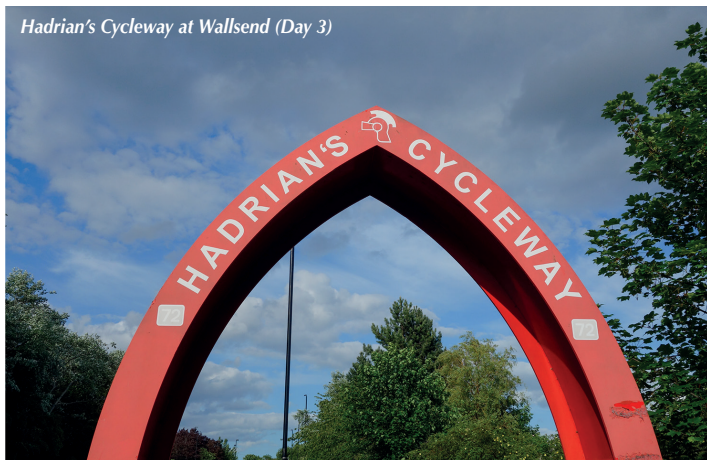
HCW particularly lends itself to exploring the many vestiges of the Roman Empire encountered and it is well worth factoring this into your itinerary to really get the best out of the ride. The route also suits making stops in historic towns and villages and replenishing calories in coastal,

upland and riverside tearooms. There is a great choice of accommodation, pubs and restaurants along HCW. Added to the archaeological interest is an array of stunning natural features that colour the route, from impressive coastal beaches and estuaries along the Cumbrian coast to wilder moorland and Pennine scenery – with the Whin Sill on the Northumberland uplands and over which the Wall passes the most impressive.

HOW TOUGH IS IT?

Travelling by bike across the country is a supremely satisfying objective and doing so on HCW is an enjoyable challenge within the reach of almost all cyclists. Of the four main northern coast-to-coast routes, HCW

Hadrian's Cycleway at Wallsend (Day 3)



DAY 1

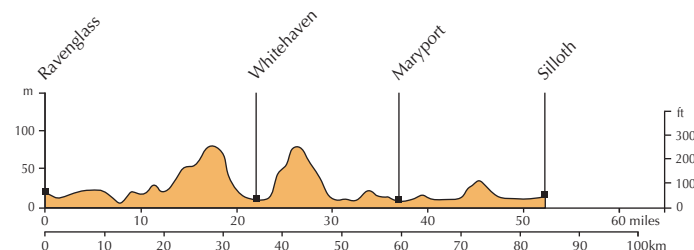
Ravenglass to Silloth

Start	Ravenglass – Glannaventa Roman bathhouse, Walls Drive (SD 088 959)
Finish	Silloth (NY 110 537)
Distance	53 miles (85km)
Total ascent	633m
Steepest climb	A day that feels flat but imperceptibly accumulates a surprising amount of height gain. The steepest climb is on Foundry Road just after leaving Parton. Roughly peaking at a tame 1:10 (10%), the climb lasts for a distance of around 200m.
Terrain	Predominantly on surfaced cycle paths (many on former railway lines) and minor roads. Three significant unsurfaced off-road sections: the first 200m after leaving Ravenglass; 1800m of raised sandy path from Seascale towards Sellafield; and the last mile into Allonby. The path from Seascale with its uneven grid mesh is the most challenging of these. Nonetheless, we have deemed all the unsurfaced off-road sections just passable for road bikes if ridden carefully.
OS maps	OL6, OL4, OS Explorer 303 and 314
Refreshments	Seascale, Beckermert (pub), Egremont, Whitehaven, Parton (Pantry bakery), Workington, Flimby (café), Maryport, Allonby, The Gincase farm park tearoom, Silloth
Intermediate distances	Seascale, 7 miles; Egremont, 15 miles; Whitehaven, 23 miles; Workington, 30 miles; Maryport, 37 miles; Silloth, 53 miles
Note	Cyclists intending to make the most of the Wall by following the MWA on Day 2 (Day 2A) might find it advantageous to cover more distance and ride 74 miles on Day 1 to finish in Bowness-on-Solway.

Given that the route passes right next to the Sellafield nuclear facility and that the scenic aspects of the West Cumbrian coast tend to have been overlooked by tourists, you might be forgiven for having low expectations of this portion of the Cycleway. Rest assured, this is a magnificent day's riding. Day 1 gives a contrasting coastal prelude to the passages of the ride along Hadrian's Wall by skirting the Lake District and working a line up the coast. The scenery is superb and the experiences – especially riding past Sellafield – will live long in the memory.

HCW leaves Ravenglass, moving momentarily inland before reaching Seascale – a village that would be in a tremendous setting if not for having the enormous Sellafield nuclear power plant and reprocessing complex as its backdrop. A fascinating unsurfaced raised sliver of land between the complex and the sea follows, giving an experience that cannot feel anything other than bizarre. An incursion inland connects the historic market town of Egremont and the fishing town of Whitehaven – largely by means of cycle paths on disused railways that avoid the prominent barrier of St Bees Head.

Whitehaven Marina is attractive and a good choice for a stop. An excellent raised path nestled between red sandstone cliffs then curves with the strand and railway to reach Parton. Further cycle paths take you to the centre of Workington, which somewhat flashes by en route to the traditional fishing village of Maryport – another good place for a break. From here a superb cycle path within the Solway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty leads to the remote coastal village of Allonby. Thereafter, minor roads through pasture work gently, if indirectly, to the village of Silloth – a jewel of the Cumbrian Riviera with its Parisian style cobbles and the ample beachfront parks of Silloth Green, one of the longest and largest extended village greens in England.



RAVENGLASS

Included within the World Heritage Site 'Frontiers of the Roman Empire', the Glannaventa Roman bathhouse is the only significant surviving structure of Glannaventa Roman Fort. It was likely first garrisoned by Hadrian's forces in the second century and is sometimes regarded as the birthplace of St Patrick – Ireland's patron saint who famously rid the island of its snakes. The bathhouse would have had hot and cold plunge pools and a hypocaust – a type of underfloor central heating system.

The wonderful Eskdale railway built in 1875 makes Ravenglass a popular destination for rail enthusiasts and families in summer. It is affectionately known as 'Ratty' and has a steam train service. Beyond the two railway stations, it seems that Ravenglass has not so much been left behind, as left alone; Georgian terraces overlook small fishing boats and sailing vessels that are tethered by rusty chains to buried stays on mud flats and sand banks. The boats rest on the flats at low tide or loll on muted waves at high tide giving a watercolour quality; little surprise this is the only coastal village incorporated into the Lake District National Park.



Looking across the estuary to Ravenglass



The bathhouse at Glannaventa Fort

If arriving by train, on the exit from the station you will find the customer car park for the Ratty Arms. If arriving by car, there is a paid car park with free public toilets behind the Ratty Arms reached by following the road round from the seafront.

From the Ratty Arms car park turn right and head uphill away from the sea, pass under a bridge of the Eskdale Steam Railway and after a further 100m turn right on Walls Road (signed 72). After 500m, you'll reach the **Glannaventa Fort Roman bathhouse** (also known as Walls Castle). The remains are the official start and they make for a secluded and appealing beginning to both the ride and its Roman theme; there is a small plaque with the information boards to commemorate the start of the route.

With the Roman theme set in motion, the 174-mile tour can truly begin. Retrace the track and turn left on the road towards the sea, passing the train stations. As the road meets the coast and bends sharply left, take a right turn onto a path that leads to a narrow pedestrian crossing attached to a bridge of the Cumbrian Coast Railway. Cyclists are obliged to dismount.



Follow an unsurfaced track for 400m. ▶ The track meets a road at a collection of houses; after 300m turn left. Just before the next farm, Hall Carleton, take a right turn (as of 2020, the 72 sign here is overgrown).

On clear days, a distinctive triangular mountain slightly separated from the other Lakeland fells is discernible – this is **Great Gable** at the head of West Water. The Scafell massif, which makes up England's highest ground, can be seen to the right.

Pass under a railway bridge and at the T-junction turn left to reach the A595 road. (The bridleway on the left 30m before the A road was once suggested by Sustrans as an alternative route – it is not a viable option.) Turn left on the less than ideal A595 and follow it for 800m to **Holmrook** or consider adopting the little-used pavement set back on the left side of the road; it is not officially designated 'shared use'.

Cross the bridge over the River Irt – its waters are fed by England's highest fells – and take the first left to thankfully escape the A595. A little climb is needed to leave Holmrook and more open pasture briefly intercedes before you pass through the upper part of **Drigg**. ▶ Continue straight on along the B road towards **Seascale**. Just before the village, the sea comes into view and the coast is soon regained.

For a name that has become synonymous with an enormous nuclear facility, **Seascale** is not what you might expect. Its beaches are stunning and the village would be brilliantly situated without the nearby complex – it is little surprise that after the introduction of the Furness Railway in the 1850s, Seascale became a popular Victorian holiday resort. On the hill down to the village, Nebb House is passed. An intriguing ship's figurehead salvaged from a wreck that reputedly represents Lord Byron has adorned this former ale house since the Victorian era: 'She cycles in the beauty like the night' perhaps?

This track can be subject to flooding during high spring tides, but it is rarely impassable.

Just off route, Drigg has a pub and café near its train station.





On the narrow path near Seascale with St Bees Head in the distance

Wheel effortlessly down the hill, passing an easily missed ice cream parlour and café on the right before reaching the village seafront, where there is a shop, a butcher, another café and public toilets in the car park. Do not pass under the railway, but instead turn left up a ramp to join the raised sandy path that sits atop an embankment between the beach and railway line. The terrain here is challenging with occasional sand drifts and protruding green plastic grid mesh plates to watch out for.

The path deteriorates where it meets the River Calder and for a brief moment you can be forgiven for thinking a bridge has been washed away. It hasn't. Dismount and follow the disjointed path rightwards under the railway bridge then turn immediately right to discover a hidden footbridge attached to the rail crossing.

Once you've crossed the Calder, continue along a tarmac road. The cycling is now beside Europe's most complex nuclear facility, **Sellafield**, with its high security fences and surveillance cameras; it is a peculiar experience. **While photography is not prohibited, it is worth noting that one of the authors taking photos for this guide was questioned by the police.** Please be tolerant of police interest here; it is, after all, reassuring to know the site is well-secured.

SELLAFIELD

Sellafield, named after the village on which it was built, had an original reactor site called Windscale. Its primary role was to provide plutonium for Britain's first nuclear bombs in 1952. Subsequent adjacent reactors were built to function as the world's first industrial-scale commercial nuclear power plant. The plant, initially called Calder Hall, was opened by the Queen in 1956. In 1957 the world's first nuclear accident occurred when the primary Windscale reactor caught fire. It burned for three days. Although the 'gamble' of turning off the reactor cooling fans and flooding the reactor worked, an ecological disaster on the scale of Chernobyl was only prevented by a very fortunate chimney filter. Physicist Terrence Price, a relative underling, raised concerns about the consequence of a potential fire that most had thought impossible. Against opposition, chief physicist and Nobel Prize winner, Sir John Cockcroft, insisted on a filter being added to the top of the chimney. The filter was added as a complete afterthought. Without the filter – initially dubbed 'Cockcroft's Folly' – the north of England would have suffered long-lasting cataclysmic effects from nuclear fallout.

Soon you'll reach Sellafield train station. From here the route moves away from the coast. Head up the slight hill from the station, following a shared-use cycle path beside Sellafield's perimeter fence. ▶ The shared use path curves rightwards away from the main exit road. After 80m, cross a facility entrance drive, pass under the main

If you still glow in the dark after taking off your high visibility cycling gear, you have been cycling too close!



Steady as you glow: Sellafield nuclear facility with 'Cockcroft's folly' right

access road and continue on an independent cycle path. This path skirts the edges of pasture fields and has a couple of sharp perpendicular turns before joining a dismantled railway. After 1km on the former railway line, the route branches left joining a track and minor road which you should follow to the village of **Beckermeth**. Take the left at the T-junction and then another left when you meet the main village thoroughfare. Continue on this, passing the White Mare pub and the distinctive red sandstone of St John's Church, until eventually you reach a junction on a sharp bend of the B5345. Turn left on this and continue until it can be exchanged for a cycle path coming off on the right after 600m.

On-road alternative

A less than ideal on-road alternative is possible from **Seascale** by heading under the railway bridge and staying on the B5344 towards **Gosforth** (make use of a segregated cycle path on the left as Seascale is exited). Leave the cycle path and turn left on the A595. The A595 is the only on-road alternative to the standard route, and although by no means the worst road to cycle along, it is a poor option. Pass through **Calder Bridge** on the A595, then after a mile take a signed left turn to **Beckermeth** and rejoin the official route at the White Mare pub.

Where the cycle path meets a housing estate and Woden Road in **Thornhill**, turn left. Follow the road as it bends sharply to the right and blends into Ehen road. Turn left on Thorny Road and uphill to access a cycle path. Turn left on this unattractive part of the route running parallel to a busy stretch of the A595. A short slip road avoids the roundabout and a left leads down to the River Ehen in **Egremont**. A brief climb will take you to the high street. You'll see the ruins of the Norman 12th-century Egremont Castle as you approach the bridge. ◀

Head along Egremont Main Street then turn right onto Chapel Street opposite the library which has a clock tower. Take the first left and follow it rightwards round the warehouses to locate a gated cycle path that

The castle is easily accessed, free to enter and has lots of benches for a stop.

EGREMONT

Egremont annually hosts the Crab Fair – named after the crab apples that were often given away there. This autumn fair has its origins in the 13th century and traditional competitions have involved gurning (Egremont also hosts the World Gurning Championships) and climbing a greasy pole for either a top hat or a side of mutton. Like so many bizarre British traditions, the pole climbing ritual has sadly succumbed to excessive insurance costs. A greasy pole can be seen by the war memorial; it now has spikes to stop any chancers. Wordsworth's poem, *The Force of Prayer* (aka *The Boy of Egremont*) is based on the true story of a potential future king of Scotland from Egremont who drowned while jumping the 'fearful chasm' of the Strid on the River Wharfe in Yorkshire. The jump is not a good idea: like the boy of Egremont, one of this book's authors leapt the Strid in the mid-1990s only narrowly avoiding 'the arms of the Wharfe' and being 'strangled by its merciless force' – as Wordsworth describes.



West Lakeland fells from the cycle path north of Egremont

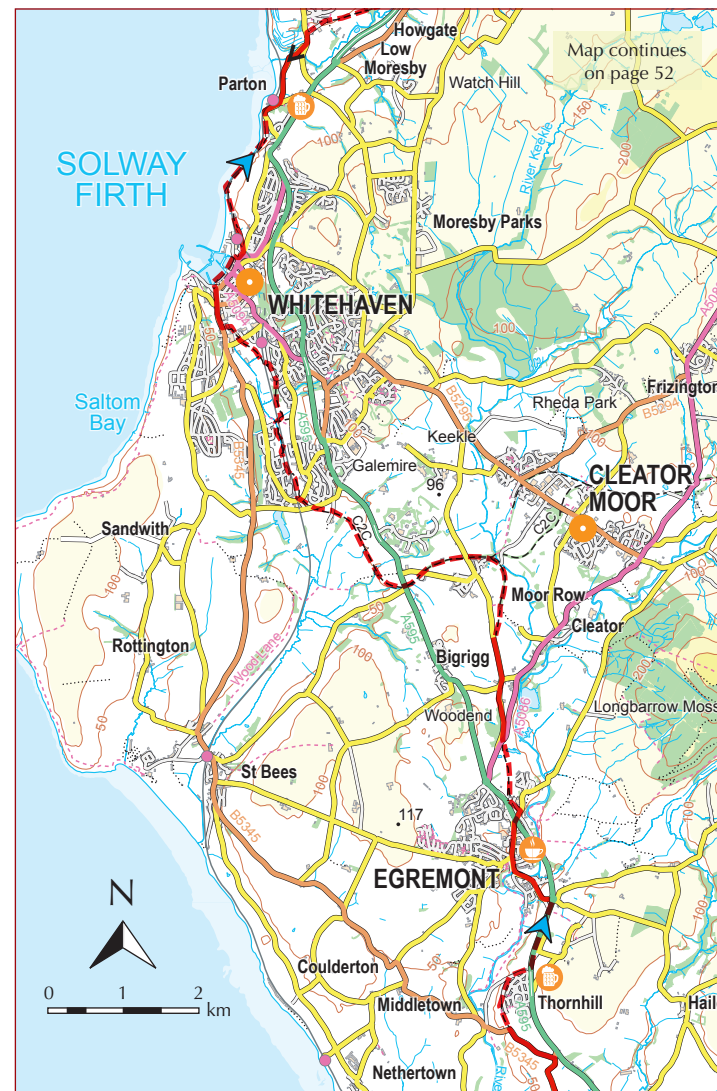
leads through a tunnel under the A595. Turn left at the road junction, then right at the petrol station along East Road. After 200m, take a left turn off this onto a fairly bumpy shared-use path between a field and a bungalow. Turn sharp right after 150m. The wooded path eventually crosses a bridge over the A5086 to reach a minor road at a lime kiln belonging to the Clints Quarry Nature Reserve; turn right. At the village of **Woodend**, turn right and 80m later turn left off the bend. After roughly 600m, take an easily missed right turn in some trees onto a cycle path that then bears leftwards through fields along a former railway line – if you miss this it is possible to access the cycle path to Whitehaven by heading straight on to meet a bridge in Woodend.

Blue metal posts with decorative railway mining trucks that commemorate the area's industrial heritage complement more orthodox signage.

The cycle path soon converges with another former rail line and the route is shared with the C2C. Bear left towards Whitehaven. ◀ Fork left at a triangular green then 100m later turn sharply left to duck beneath a railway line and emerge on a housing estate. Turn right along the residential Wasdale Close, at the end of which a path on the left leads to Crossdale Avenue. Turn right on this to resume the cycle path at the end. This leads



HCW shares its course with the C2C on the way into Whitehaven



The tunnel is not as low at it first appears – but it might be prudent for giants to duck!

down the right-hand side of a rugby club and under the railway to an immediate left turn. When the path meets a minor road go up a micro hill then turn left along Esk Avenue. After 150m look out for an easily missed left turn onto a cycle path with hairpin bends that ducks under the railway line. ◀ Continue down the side of the football stadium to a T-junction where a right and immediate left lead you back onto a cycle path. You'll emerge on the busy Parson Street. Turn right and after 400m use Quay Street to access the waterfront marina.

At **Whitehaven** marina, turn right on a wide traffic-free area where there is often an ice cream van. From Whitehaven to just outside of Workington, HCW shares its course with another excellent Sustrans ride, the Reivers Route.

At **Whitehaven** marina the eagle-eyed will spot the metal sculpture that marks the beginning of the C2C down a boating ramp. Whitehaven has a rich sea-faring history, which is recognised by its maritime museum and an annual festival. In 1778 the town was attacked by the proto US Navy commanded by John Paul Jones during the American War of Independence. The erstwhile importance of mining in the region explains many of the cycle paths that occupy former mining railways. A distinctive candlestick chimney to the south of the harbour vents a mineshaft of the former Wellington Pit, scene of Cumbria's worst mining disaster in 1910 when 132 miners lost their lives.

Continue along the pedestrianised marina front until this ends at a seaweed sculpture, where a right turn can be followed by a left briefly onto the A road. Turn left after the petrol station, followed by an immediate left fork to reach a cycle path that arcs majestically round Tanyard Bay poised above the railway and below sandstone cliffs. At the T-junction, turn left to reach **Parton**. ◀

After Parton, the road crosses Lowca Beck and offers up the stiffest climb of the day. Halfway up, turn left on

A German U-boat fired on Parton, Harrington and Whitehaven in August 1915.



a busier road and in 100m turn right onto Stamford Hill Avenue. An immediate left is meant to be taken onto a cycle path leading across a playing field: the metal barriers are really awkward, especially if you're heavily loaded. The barriers and playing field path can be avoided by continuing along Stamford Hill Avenue, which soon becomes unsurfaced and curves uphill to meet a lane just to the right of the playing field's exit. Turn right and after 40m adopt the cycle path rather than concrete farm path.

Follow the cycle path for 6 miles to Workington. Take a sharp right turn with an S-bend as you come to an industrial complex. The path then leads you through Workington Fire Station, avoiding a large roundabout and adopting a shared-use path on the right of Moorclose Road. Branch off Moorclose Road after 200m or so onto a secluded wooded cycle path that negotiates most of Workington's urban expanse until you reach Central Way at a series of car parks. Head up to the surprisingly easily missed pedestrianised centre of **Workington**.

The proud town of **Workington** is the home of Uppies and Downies, an idiosyncratic sport played only in Workington: the Uppies are participants traditionally

Poised above the railway and below sandstone cliffs of Tanyard Bay



resident in the slightly more affluent upper area of Workington while the Downies are those whom – historically at least – would have been resident in the reclaimed marshes, dockland and coastal dwellings. Matches have been recorded as far back as the 16th century and are still played annually. They involve upwards of 1000 players trying to move a ball – usually by means of a scrum – to the opposition's 'goal' across town; this often takes hours.

Continue straight on down the hill to pass through a very dark underpass. Just after this, take the cycle path forking right and cross over the River Derwent on the Navvies cycle bridge.

In 400m after crossing the bridge over the main road, ensure you take the easily missed left turn on the 72. The cycle path continues, eventually running parallel to the busy A595. This is eventually crossed and the path continues on the righthand side. At the hamlet of St Helens, turn right uphill on a circuitous detour. A left onto a gated cycle path followed by a left downhill leads to **Flimby**. On leaving the village it is necessary to turn right along the A595 for 200m before escaping left onto a pleasant cycle path.

When the cycle path ceases, turn right and follow the road up to a T-junction where a left leads to the centre of **Maryport**. ►

Workington's Navvies Bridge replaced a bridge washed away by the 2009 floods

Maryport's octagonal lighthouse is one of the oldest cast iron lighthouses in the world.



View towards Maryport's octagonal lighthouse

MARYPORT

The Roman name for Maryport was *Alauna*. It was the site of an important fort, built at the same time as Hadrian's Wall. The remains of the Cumbrian coastal frontier fort can be seen on the hilltop beside the Senhouse Roman Museum, which explains the area's significance to the Romans and showcases artefacts found locally – the most bemusing of which is an altar stone that Melvyn Bragg described as 'a spectacularly engorged member'. It has a serpent winding round it. Roman Milefortlet 21 is signposted from the route 5km north of Maryport. Its earthworks can be viewed with a five minute climb up the hill beside the coastal path. It is perhaps more impressive than the remains of Maryport's main fort.

Maryport has a rich seafaring history and its maritime museum in the harbour is well worth visiting. Maryport was the birthplace of Fletcher Christian, who famously mutinied on *HMS Bounty*. It was also the childhood home of Thomas Henry Ismay, who founded the White Star Line that built the *Titanic*. Thomas' son, Joseph Bruce Ismay, was a passenger on the ship's ill-fated maiden voyage in 1912. His subsequent survival was clouded by disputed rumours of him leaving on the first lifeboat at the expense of women and children. The town continues to be a working fishing port. Maryport features in several paintings by 'matchstick man' LS Lowry.





Beyond Maryport: three sisters using part of HCW to connect Snowdon, Scafell Pike and Ben Nevis

The Elizabethan Crosscanonby salt pans are passed between Maryport and Allonby.



Strong Westerlies from the Irish Sea are not uncommon around Allonby

Turn right over the bridge in the centre of Maryport harbour, then immediately left. The road ends at a car park. Continue on a superb traffic-free section beside the sea. This leads to Maryport Golf Club; follow its drive to meet the B5300. Cross straight over this to adopt a cycle path separated from the road by a bank of gorse bushes. After two miles, this crosses back over the road. ◀ The last 1km into Allonby is unsurfaced and can be a little challenging for road bikes, although the easily accessed B5300 is not the worst alternative. The cycle path stops in **Allonby**, a little past some of its shops and cafes.

In 1857 Charles Dickens stayed in **Allonby** with Wilkie 'The Woman in White' Collins at the Ship Inn. He described Allonby as a 'dreary little place'. This is not altogether misplaced: on grey rain-swept days, when westerlies lift spray from the Irish Sea and blast stoic grey rendered buildings on the sea-front, Allonby can take on an austere look. And yet, with its expansive greens and impressive beach, Allonby in its very remoteness proves both a bleak and hauntingly beautiful place where the voices of ancient Cumberland fishermen and smugglers seem to whisper on the wind.

From Allonby, head north for one mile on the B5300 – this can be busy at certain times of the day.

Turn right towards Tarns. After 3 miles of quiet well-signed farm roads, you'll come to a T-junction at **Tarns Dub**. Turn left but after only 100m turn left again. Pass the caravan site beside the tarn. At the next junction, turn left followed by a right in quick succession. Climb over the gentle hill. ▶ Turn right at the next junction, where the popular Gincase Tearoom is situated. After half a mile, there is little warning for a sharp right turn at a farm – this is

The mountains of Dumfries and Galloway are nicely framed across the sea.





*Late season cycling
on rain-washed
Criffel Street, Silloth*

dangerous if taken too quickly because of mud and loose material. The road eventually becomes so little used that grass grows upon its middle tarmac. At the next junction, turn right. Turn left (essentially straight on) for one mile to **Silloth**. At the next junction, turn right. As the road bends sharply to the right, take a left straight ahead onto Links Close, at the end of which is a cycle path that cuts across to Station Road. A left is followed by a right leading to the cobbles of Criffel Street beside Silloth Green.

SILLOTH

Silloth, which reputedly has the largest village green or rather series of village greens in England, was a popular seaside resort in the late Victorian and Edwardian eras. Its tourism was, however, badly affected by Beeching's ruthless branch line closures of the 1960s. There is a hint in the cobbles of Criffel Street and even in its architecture of something continental about Silloth. Although today Silloth is little known beyond Cumbria, the wry moniker 'jewel in the crown of the Cumbrian Riviera' is not altogether unfitting and the village proves a pleasing location to conclude the first day of HCW.

EAST TO WEST

The stage is straightforward E-W. Although the day has more ascent than might be anticipated, there are no particularly difficult climbs, with the steepest of the day being that from the Seascale beach which passes the Byron figurehead.

DAY 2

Silloth to Haltwhistle

Start	Silloth (NY 110 537)
Finish	Haltwhistle (NY 705 640). The quiet Bardon Mill, five miles further along the route, is also a good choice
Distance	64 miles (103km)
Total ascent	782m
Steepest climb	Greenwhelt Bank just after Greenhead is a feisty Pennines beast on a segregated tarmac cycle path that peaks at 1 in 4 – it is the hardest climb on HCW.
Terrain	Predominantly on minor roads with occasional brief interludes on mainly surfaced cycle paths.
OS maps	314, 315, OL43
Refreshments	Kirkbride (Bush Inn with 'cycle pit-stop'); Bowness-on-Solway (Kings Arms and cafés); Burgh by Sands (Greyhound Inn); Carlisle, Assembly Restaurant (an upmarket option, Rickerby); Crosby (pub); Warwick Bridge (pub); Newby Grange Golf Club (café – very pleasant); Hayton (Stone Inn, friendly, weekdays 12–2pm, all day Sat–Sun); Brampton; Lanercost Priory (café); Birdoswald Roman Fort (café); Gilsland (pub); Greenhead (Greenhead Tea Room – super).
Intermediate distances	Angerton-Kirkbride, 12 miles; Bowness-on-Solway, 22 miles; Carlisle, 35 miles; Brampton, 50 miles; Gilsland, 59 miles; Haltwhistle, 64 miles
Note	Cyclists intending to make the most of the Wall should leave the official HCW after the climb from Greenhead and use the MWA (Day 2A) to finish in the Once Brewed area.